Homenet South Asia Trust

National Consultation on Building Membership Based Organization in Nepal

28-29th September, 2011

One of the objectives of HomeNet South Asia is to promote and build Membership Based organization of homebased workers in South Asia. Homebased workers are scattered and isolated; because they are invisible. There are 50 million of homebased workers; but, surprisingly, there is not enough organization of homebased workers to speak for their rights. Promoting to build membership based organizations is an effort to organize homebased workers for their visibility and recognition.

In October 2010, a joint consultative workshop was organized by HomeNet Nepal and HomeNet South Asia in Kathmandu. Homebased workers and their organizations participated from different districts of Nepal. The purpose of the consultation was to share the process of building MBO by HNN and to interact on the possible structure for HomeNet Nepal.

HomeNet Nepal conducted a **structure study** for their member organization. The study was to examine; how many organization functions like MBO with those 6 core principles as broad indicators - Democracy, transparency, accountability solidarity, collective benefit and Independence.

A South Asian Trainers group has been formed by HomeNet South Asia to assist in building MBOs in the region. The trainers group designed the workshop and the methodology to conduct.

The workshop started with the **presentation** on what is MBO? Mr. Dave Spooner from WIEGO gave presentation to explain the concept of MBO and why it is effective for the workers right.

Two **questions were raised for the presentation:**

   a) *How MBO should gain independence from government interference?*
   b) *In Nepal; unions are governed by Political parties. How to deal with such unions?*

Mr. Dave responded; government should not have control on MBO, though, MBO should abide with the rules of government but decision making, electing leader, and financial aspects; all should be exercised by members of MBO. The key characteristic of MBO is to have power to express their views in democratic way and should have legitimate voice to set-up their own policies and rules to negotiate with government for improvement.

On second question, he responded, "at international front, there are trade unions who are not influenced by political parties. Through their general meeting; they reach to a decision whether or not they support certain political party is through democratic votes of the members. However, if political party controls leadership and drives the policies in a trade union, then, it is not MBO. There are co-operatives in the world who are either controlled by government or political parties; but those cannot be called MBO".

The next presentation was the highlights of the study presented by Executive Director of HomeNet Nepal. He mentioned; twenty organizations were selected to study out of 150. The key findings were around: Legitimacy, organization policy and plans, governance, inclusiveness and good practices. The organizations studied were Cooperatives, NGOs, informal groups, registered and unregistered, self help groups and Trade unions who are members of HomeNet Nepal. It was examined; organizations lack institutionalization and good leadership.

The workshop was intent to discuss the issues of forming MBO in Nepal. It was a good platform for organizations of homebased workers to discuss the challenges they face in building membership based organization. Therefore, a group exercise was performed; making groups of cooperatives, unions, self help group and NGOs. The discussion was around; capacity of organization to run MBO, funds, membership fees and registration.

Challenges of Groups:

a) **Cooperatives:** The cooperative group came out with the issues like *lack of institutionalization skills*, *lack of administrative capacities*, *lack of ownership by homebased workers due to ignorance*, *lack of leadership skills*,

b) **Trade Unions-** The issues reflected by Trade Unions were: *lack of understanding about Trade unions, threat of losing jobs if unions are formed; reluctance to join unions because no incentive are provided like INGO/NGO.*

c) **Self Help Groups and Informal Groups**: The group came out with the issues: *lack of capacity, leadership quality, skill and training, lack of resources and good market,* lack of family support, *undemocratic way of work, lack of transparency, lack of solidarity, inability to work for collective benefit; lack of technical support,*

d) **NGOs**- This group had major challenge of political parties interference. Also, it faces issues about renewal of organization.

Taking issues further; group work was executed to discuss the strategies.

After the discussion on issues, challenges and strategies on MBO; the second day was dedicated to discuss the structure of HomeNet Nepal.

What should be the structure of HomeNet Nepal as Membership Based Network?

Understanding the HomeNet's formation; Mr. Dave presented three types of possible structure for HomeNet Nepal. The three possible structures were:
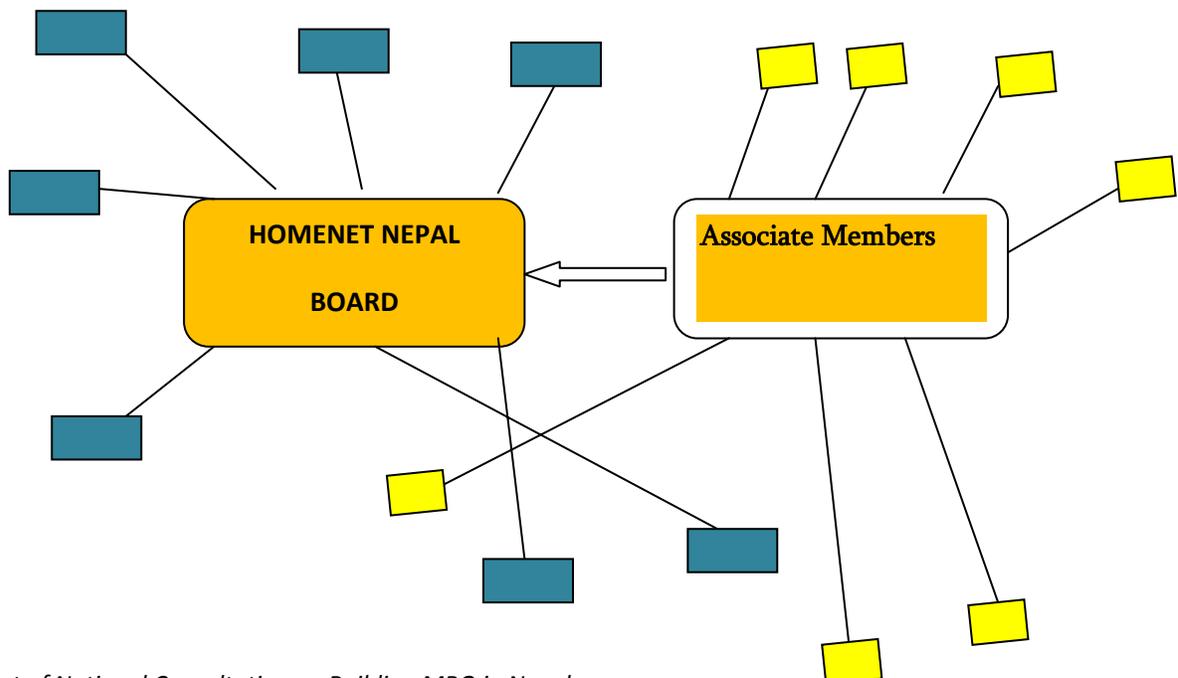
A) MBO and Non MBO

| MBO | N-MBO |
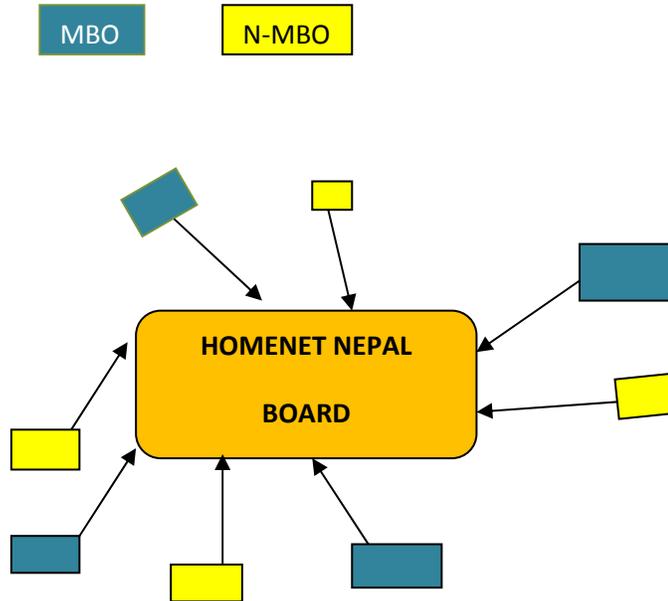
In this model, both MBOs and non-MBOs are members of the network, only MBO representatives are allowed to have seats on the Board. MBOs are solely responsible for the governance of the organization, the appointment of staff, the oversight of budgets etc.
.

B) HomeNet Board with Associate Members:

In this model; only MBOs are able to be on the Board of the HomeNet, but the non-MBOs are able to join an "associate members' group" or advisory board".

The non-MBOs are thus able to have an advisory role to the MBO representatives; they might even be able to attend meetings of the Board, but, in a non-voting capacity and would not be able to represent the organization in any way without the Board's agreement.

c) Formal Representation of MBO and Non MBO in Board:

60%	40%
HOMENET NEPAL BOARD	
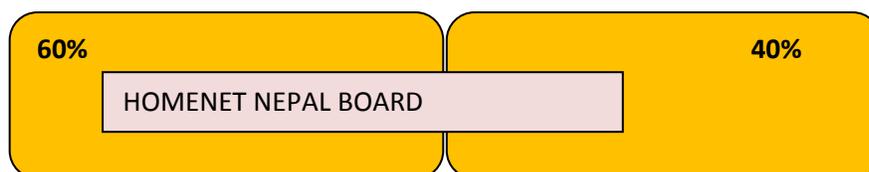
The third model; enables both MBOs and non-MBOs to be formally represented on the Board, each with full voting rights, but constituted to ensure that MBO representatives are always in the majority. (In this example, 60% of the votes are held by MBOs). There could also be other constitutional arrangements to ensure MBO overall control, such as a stipulation that the Chair must always be an MBO representative.

The three presented model of MBOs were discussed. The member organizations of HomeNet Nepal decided to have model "*HomeNet Board with Associate members*". The members felt the need of Associate members who are Technical and expert people. They would be required by MBO for their expertise. However, they should not be provided voting rights in the Board.

The consensus on adopting model-2 forwarded the discussion to next session on National, Regional and International structure for HomeNets.

After presenting HomeNet Nepal's current structure which was non-MBO model; it was agreed by the members to make HomeNet Nepal membership based network by adopting model 2.

Further, existing structure of HomeNet South Asia was explained. HomeNet South Asia at Regional level aims to become Membership Based network; and for that; entire process has been designed and is implemented. The structure study would lead to various trainings and workshops to capacitate member organization of HomeNet; which in turn would assist to elect homebased workers representative in respective HomeNet board. This would make HomeNet a membership Based network of homebased workers organization at National level. The national structure would assist in building Regional structure of HomeNet South Asia.

The two-day workshop completed with the way forward for HomeNet Nepal and next, workshop on MBO scheduled for Pakistan.